عشرة أسباب لانشراح الصدر

Ten Ways to Gain Peace of Heart

Written by
Shaykh ʿAbdur-Razzāq ibn ʿAbdul-Muḥsin al-Badr

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Translated by Khalil Klopfenstein

For Comments or Corrections contact:
Tulayhah@gmail.com

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

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Introduction

All praise is due to Allāh, Lord of all creation. And may peace and blessings be upon the most noble of the Prophets, the Seal of the Messengers, our Prophet, Muḥammad, the trustworthy one. And likewise upon his family and upon all of his companions, and upon whoever follows their guidance until the Day of Recompense.

To proceed:

Peace of heart is a noble goal and dearly sought-after, as well as a tremendous blessing from the Lord of all creation.

The phrase "peace of heart" – literally "openness of the chest" – refers to one's chest being at ease and at peace, free of anything which troubles or tarnishes it, instead remaining cheerful throughout a life of good and plenty.

When Allāh عَزَّوَجَلَّ blesses one of His worshippers with this blessing by opening up his chest and making things easy for him, then the beneficial aspects of both his spiritual and worldly life can become a reality and his aims and goals can be attained. That is because acts of worship will become easy for him, and acts of obedience will become simple. He

finds himself able to attend to what will benefit him, and he becomes able to raise his children well.

On the other hand, when one's chest becomes constricted, then many of the good things in his life will become unattainable. He will find himself lacking both the power to do good deeds as well as the motivation to undertake various types of righteous actions. Instead, he will continue moving from one worry to another and from one sadness to the next.

So having peace of heart is the most significant factor in helping a worshiper to achieve his goals and attain what will benefit him. That is why when Allāh commanded His Prophet Mūsā عليه السلام to go to the tyrant Fir'awn in order to call him to the truth and to warn him of the grave consequences of his tyranny, Mūsā عليه السلام turned to Allāh in supplication and asked,

﴿قَالَ رَبِّ ٱشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِيٓ أَمْرِي﴾

"Lord, open my chest and make this task of mine easy for me" [ṬāHā: 25-26].

Similarly, Allāh سبحانه وتعالى mentioned His blessing on His servant, Messenger and chosen one Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم by saying,

﴿أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ﴾

"Didn't We open your chest for you?" [Ash-Sharḥ: 1].

That is a divinely-granted blessing, a gift from the caring Lord Allāh ﷻ to him, "for opening one's chest is one of the greatest causes of being guided, while tightness of one's chest is one of the causes of being astray. Just as opening one's chest is one of the greatest blessings, likewise constricting one's chest is one of the most severe punishments."[1]

It is only possible to achieve this most sought-after goal through giving importance to this religion and through putting it into practice. The more that a worshipper is committed to putting this religion into practice and following whatever it entails, the greater share of that peace of heart he will have as a result.

Building on that, it is possible to boil down all of the factors which lead to peace of heart to two key points which build on one another:

First: That peace of heart can only be attained by Allāh's grace and His care for the slave.

Second: That this blessing and gift from Allāh only comes as a result of obeying Allāh ﷻ and following His divine guidance.

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[1] See: *Shifā' al-'Alīl* of Ibn al-Qayyim, p. 107.

These two points encompass this entire topic and serve as its very foundation. For the hearts are in Allāh's Hand ﷻ; He turns them however He wishes. They are subject to His management and under His power. Whatever Allāh wills to be is, and whatever He does not will to be is not. This is as Allāh ﷻ says,

﴿فَمَن يُرِدِ ٱللَّهُ أَن يَهْدِيَهُۥ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُۥ لِلْإِسْلَٰمِ ۖ وَمَن يُرِدْ أَن يُضِلَّهُۥ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُۥ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ ۚ﴾

"Whoever Allāh wishes to guide, He opens his chest to Islām. And whomever He wishes to misguide, He makes his chest tight and constricted as though he were climbing up the sky" [Al-An'ām: 125]. And He ﷻ says,

﴿أَفَمَن شَرَحَ ٱللَّهُ صَدْرَهُۥ لِلْإِسْلَٰمِ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦ ۚ﴾

"Is he whose chest has been opened to Islām so that he is upon a light from his Lord [like one whose chest has not been opened?]" [Az-Zumar: 22].

So this peace of heart – this open chest – can only be attained by Allāh alone enabling it to happen. Therefore, one ought to seek it from Him ﷻ and through the path that He has legislated and divinely revealed. So the believer should exert himself in supplicating to Allāh ﷻ and sincerely turning to Him for protection that his chest would be opened and his affairs made easy and that Allāh would decree for

him to be one of His joyful worshippers in both this life and the next.

After that, the believer should follow up supplicating and turning to Allāh ﷻ for protection by taking the means that lead to actualizing this tremendous aim and great objective.

The great scholar Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله once mentioned,

أَنَّ حَالَ الْعَبْدِ فِي الْقَبْرِ كَحَالِ الْقَلْبِ فِي الصَّدْرِ نَعِيمًا وَعَذَابًا، وَسِجْنًا وَانْطِلَاقًا.

"The state of a slave in the grave is like the state of one's heart in his chest – in bliss or torment, imprisoned or free."[1]

If one's chest is tight and constricted towards this religion and its guidance, then his grave will be constricting for him. But if his chest is open to this religion and his heart is receptive to it, then his grave will be expansive for him and it will be a source of pleasure and joy.

There are clear signs and plain indications that one's chest has been opened which will be apparent in the believer, whose results he will appreciate in both this life and the next. These signs can be summarized into three points:

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[1] *Zād al-Ma'ād*, 2/25.

First: That one is oriented towards the eternal and everlasting hereafter.

Second: That one turns away from this passing and fleeting life.

Third: That one prepares for his death and what will follow it.

So if these three things are present in a worshipper's heart, that is an indication that his chest has been opened and that he has peace of heart.

The great scholar Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ said, "A sign of this is: That one's chest has been opened to the level of īmān; that it is open to and at peace with Allāh's command; that it frequently returns to remembering Allāh, loves Him and looks forward to meeting Him; and that it turns away from this life of deception. This is like what is mentioned in a well-known saying: When light enters one's heart, it expands and opens up. One might ask, 'Does this have a sign?' The answer would be, 'Turning away from this life of deception, turning one's focus towards the eternal hereafter, and preparing for one's death before it comes.'"[1]

On the other hand, if worldly concerns and other worries overrun one's heart, his chest will become constricted in equal measure to how preoccupied he becomes with these things.

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[1] *Miftāḥ Dār as-Sa'ādah*, 1/149.

After having shown the importance of this topic and how much it is needed, we will now embark on our main objective, which is: mentioning the ten factors through which one can gain this peace of heart. It is considered to be the most comprehensive list regarding how to gain and achieve this praiseworthy goal, and it is a summary inspired by a wonderful chapter which the exemplary scholar Ibn al-Qayyim included in his book *Zād al-Ma'ād* under the heading, "Factors for Opening the Chest and How the Prophet ﷺ Achieved this in the Most Perfect Way."[1]

Success is from Allāh alone. It is from Him that we receive aid and from Whom we ask for help. And may the peace and blessings of Allāh be upon His Prophet Muḥammad, as well as on his family and all of his companions.

[1] Zād al-Ma'ād, 2/22.

Factor 1:
Singling out Allāh and Making One's Devotion Exclusively for Him

Singling out Allāh ﷻ in worship and making one's devotion exclusively for Him is considered the greatest factor in gaining peace of heart, and it is the very purpose for which Allāh created the creation and brought them into existence to fulfill. This is just as Allāh ﷻ said,

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ ٱلْجِنَّ وَٱلْإِنسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

"And I only created Jinn-kind and Mankind to worship Me" [Adh-Dhāriyāt: 56].

For Allāh ﷻ only created the created beings to single Him out in worship and make their devotion exclusively for Him. This is to be done in a state of humility, brokenness, submissiveness, obedience, compliance with His instructions, and directing every act of worship exclusively to Him. This is as Allāh ﷻ says,

﴿وَأَنَّ ٱلْمَسَٰجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُواْ مَعَ ٱللَّهِ أَحَدًا﴾

"The places of worship are exclusively for Allāh, so do not call on anyone alongside Allāh" [Al-Jinn: 18], and He ﷻ says,

﴿وَمَآ أُمِرُوٓاْ إِلَّا لِيَعۡبُدُواْ ٱللَّهَ مُخۡلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ حُنَفَآءَ﴾

"And they were only commanded to worship Allāh, making their devotion exclusively for Him without deviation" [Al-Bayyinah: 5].

So the more that a worshipper places importance on actualizing this *tawḥīd*, pays attention to it, gives it its rights and its dues and distances himself from anything that would contradict or detract from it, then the more complete level of an open chest, peace of heart, tranquil soul, and joy in both this life and the next he will have.

Ibn al-Qayyim ﷺ said, "The greatest factor in opening up one's chest is *tawḥīd*. The openness of one's chest will be in line with the completeness, strength and high level of one's *tawḥīd*.

Allāh ﷻ says,

﴿أَفَمَن شَرَحَ ٱللَّهُ صَدۡرَهُۥ لِلۡإِسۡلَٰمِ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٖ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦ﴾

"Is he whose chest has been opened to Islām so that he is upon a light from his Lord [like one whose chest has not been opened?]" [Az-Zumar: 22].

Allāh ﷻ says,

﴿فَمَن يُرِدِ ٱللَّهُ أَن يَهْدِيَهُۥ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُۥ لِلْإِسْلَٰمِ ۖ وَمَن يُرِدْ أَن يُضِلَّهُۥ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهُۥ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَأَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى ٱلسَّمَآءِ ۚ﴾

"Whoever Allāh wishes to guide, He opens his chest to Islām. And whomever He wishes to misguide, He makes his chest tight and constricted as though he were climbing up the sky" [Al-An'ām: 125].

So guidance and actualizing that *tawḥīd* are some of the most significant factors in opening up one's chest, while *shirk* and misguidance are some of the most significant factors for being tight-chested and deviated."[1]

The heart in man's chest was only created to single out Allāh ﷻ for worship and serve Him. So when the heart deviates from this purpose for which it was created, then it becomes unsettled and beset with worries, grief, and troubles at levels equal to how far it has strayed from singling out Allāh for worship and making one's devotion exclusively for Him.

[1] *Zād al-Ma'ād*, 2/23.

The Second Factor: The Light Which Allāh Casts into the Heart of His Worshiper

Allāh ﷻ says,

﴿أَفَمَن شَرَحَ ٱللَّهُ صَدۡرَهُۥ لِلۡإِسۡلَٰمِ فَهُوَ عَلَىٰ نُورٖ مِّن رَّبِّهِۦۚ ...﴾

"Is he whose chest has been opened to Islām so that he is upon a light from his Lord ..." [Az-Zumar: 22] – meaning, such that he is upon a light that his Lord provided for him out of His goodness and bounty. And this light is the light of *īmān*. "So Allāh broadens and expands his chest and brings joy to his heart. But if this light is taken out of the slave's heart, it becomes tight and constricted. It becomes like the most constricting and oppressive prison. And the openness of a slave's heart is in line with his share of this light."[1]

Al-Ḥāfidh Ibn Rajab ؒ said, "A heart which the light of *īmān* has entered and which has been made open and expansive is at peace with the truth, receptive to it and accepting of it. It flees from falsehood, hates it and will not accept it."[2]

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[1] *Zād al-Ma'ād*, 2/23.
[2] *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wal-Ḥikam*, 2/100.

That is why a worshiper should have such a great longing for this light and hope that His Lord will make him one of those whom He honors with that light of His out of His goodness and bounty. This is as Allāh ﷾ says,

﴿وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱللَّهَ حَبَّبَ إِلَيۡكُمُ ٱلۡإِيمَٰنَ وَزَيَّنَهُۥ فِي قُلُوبِكُمۡ وَكَرَّهَ إِلَيۡكُمُ ٱلۡكُفۡرَ وَٱلۡفُسُوقَ وَٱلۡعِصۡيَانَۚ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلرَّٰشِدُونَ فَضۡلٗا مِّنَ ٱللَّهِ وَنِعۡمَةٗۚ وَٱللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٞ﴾

"But Allāh has made *īmān* dear to you and made it beautiful to your hearts while making disbelief, wickedness and disobedience detestable to you. That is a favor from Allāh and a blessing. And Allāh is All-Knowing, All-Wise" [Al-Ḥujurāt: 7-8].

So the worshiper should ask his Lord to renew the *īmān* in his heart so that he might increase his share of this light and brightness. For al-Ḥākim narrated that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Ās رضي الله عنهما said that Allāh's Messenger ﷺ said,

((إِنَّ الْإِيمَانَ لَيَخْلَقُ فِي جَوْفِ أَحَدِكُمْ كَمَا يَخْلَقُ الثَّوْبُ الْخَلِقُ؛ فَسْأَلُوا اللهَ أَنْ يُجَدِّدَ الْإِيمَانَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ.))

"*Īmān* certainly wears out in one's core just as one's clothing wears out. So ask Allāh to renew the *īmān* in your hearts."[1]

Imām Muḥammad ibn Aslam aṭ-Ṭūsī ﷺ said, "*Īmān* begins from Allāh as a favor, mercy and blessing which He gifts to any slave of His He wishes. He casts a light into the slave's heart which enlightens his heart, He expands his chest, and He increases the *īmān* in his heart and makes it beloved to him. So when the heart becomes lit up and *īmān* increases in his heart and becomes beloved to him, then his heart believes in Allāh, His Angels, His Scriptures, His Messengers, the Last Day, and *al-qadar*, both the good of it and the bad of it, and he believes in the resurrection of the dead and the reckoning and *Jannah* and the Hellfire so much so that it is as if he can see them. That is a result of the light which Allāh cast into his heart. When his heart believes, then his tongue gives voice to what the heart believes; it affirms it and testifies that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allāh and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh and that these things which the heart believes in are the truth.

Then when his heart believes and his tongue testifies, his limbs will act in obedience to Allāh's command and they will act in accordance with that belief. They will discharge Allāh's rights over him regarding the obligatory duties and stay away from what Allāh has forbidden out of *īmān* and

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[1] *Mustadrak 'alay aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥayn* 1/4. Graded as Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī in *as-Silsilah aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah*, no. 1585.

affirmation of what is in the heart and what the tongue has expressed. So if he does that, then he is a believer.”[1]

[1] Reported by Abū Nu’aym in *Ḥilyah al-Awliyā’* 9/245.

The Third Factor: Gaining Beneficial Knowledge

Whenever a worshiper increases in gaining religious knowledge that is based on the Book of Allāh ﷻ and the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ, his peace of heart increases and his condition improves.

Knowledge elevates a worshiper and increases his joy and success in both this life and the next, and it adds light and brightness to his path. This is just as Allāh ﷻ says,

﴿يَرْفَعِ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ مِنكُمْ وَٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْعِلْمَ دَرَجَـٰتٍ﴾

"Allāh elevates those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge by degrees" [Al-Mujādilah: 11].

In addition to that, knowledge is a paradise which the student of knowledge lives in, a meadow in bloom, and a garden bearing fruit in which he can find joy, good company, repose and happiness. In it, he can access the best fruits and all sorts of flowers.

That is why we find a number of scholars have titled their written works in the Islāmic sciences in line with the descriptions they believe are fitting for this knowledge, such as *Rawḍah al-'Uqalā'* (Meadow of the Intelligent), *Bustān al-*

'Ārifīn (Garden of the Cognizant), *Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn* (Meadows of the Righteous), *ar-Rawḍ al-Bāsim* (Beaming Meadows), and so on with other names which point to these meanings which take hold in the heart of the scholar and student of knowledge regarding knowledge.

It is enough of a virtue of beneficial knowledge that it can take the one who has it to the gardens of pleasure. This is just as the noble Prophet ﷺ said,

((مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا، سَهَّلَ اللهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَىٰ الْجَنَّةِ.))

"Whoever takes path in pursuit of knowledge, Allāh will make the path to *Jannah* easy for him."[1]

[1] Reported by Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 2699.

Chapter 4: Continually Turning Back to Allāh and Approaching Him in a Good Way

One of the causes of peace of heart is: continually turning back to Allāh ﷻ, approaching Him ﷻ in a good way, and humbling oneself in worship and obedience.

For worship and obedience are a refreshening of the heart, a familiar friend of the soul, a pleasure to the eyes, and a joy of the chests.

The great scholar Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "Returning back to Allāh سبحانه وتعالى, loving Him with all of one's heart, approaching Him, and taking enjoyment in worshiping Him – there is nothing which brings more peace to one's heart than that. So much so that sometimes one could say, 'If I experience this kind of feeling in *Jannah*, then that would be the good life.'"[1]

Take, for example, the prayer: how much pleasure of the eyes, refreshment of the mind, and tranquility of the believer's heart does it contain, such that the Prophet ﷺ said,

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[1] *Zād al-Ma'ād*, 2/23.

((قُمْ يَا بِلَالُ فَأَرِحْنَا بِالصَّلَاةِ.))

"Come, O Bilal, and give us refreshment with the prayer."[1]

And in another ḥadīth he ﷺ said,

((جُعِلَتْ قُرَّةُ عَيْنِي فِي الصَّلَاةِ.))

"The pleasure of my eyes has been put in the prayer."[2]

While discussing the actions of the righteous people, the great scholar Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "The first thing that would come to their minds when one of them would wake up from his sleep would be to make wuḍū' and pray as Allāh instructed. Then after fulfilling that obligation in its proper time, they would occupy themselves with reciting the Qur'ān and remembering Allāh until the sun rose, and then pray the *ḍuḥā* prayer. Next, they would tend to whatever Allāh had made their source of provision. Then when the time of *Dhuhr* arrived, they would hasten to purify himself and strive to pray in the first row of the masjid. They would then fulfill their obligations as they had been commanded, giving full measure to its conditions, pillars, recommended acts as well as its internal dimensions such as presence of heart, taking oneself to account, and their being present before

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[1] Reported by Abū Dāwūd in his *Sunan*, no. 4986. Graded as Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī in *Mishkāh al-Maṣābīḥ*, no. 1253.

[2] Reported by an-Nasā'ī in *al-Mujtabā*, no. 3940. Graded as Ṣaḥīḥ by al-Albānī in *as-Silsilah aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥah*, no. 1809.

their Lord. Once they had finished praying, their hearts, bodies and entire selves had been affected in a meaningful way that can be seen on their faces, their tongues and their limbs, and they find its fruits in their hearts, such as directing themselves towards the everlasting life and turning away from this life of deception and lessening their chasing after this life and its fleeting enjoyments.

The prayer prohibits one against immorality and wrongdoing, causes Him to love meeting Allāh, and causes him to flee from anything that would cut him off from Allāh."[1]

[1] *Ṭarīq al-Hijratayn*, pp. 314-315.

Chapter 5:
Constantly Remembering Allāh

A worshiper constantly remembering Allāh ﷻ is one of the greatest causes of achieving peace of heart, rest in one's soul, and the alleviation of anxiety and grief. In fact, suffering and difficulty cannot be removed without remembering Allāh and sincerely seeking refuge in Him. Allāh ﷻ said,

﴿ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ وَتَطۡمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُم بِذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِۗ أَلَا بِذِكۡرِ ٱللَّهِ تَطۡمَئِنُّ ٱلۡقُلُوبُ﴾

"Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allāh. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allāh hearts are assured" [Ar-Ra'd: 28].

Therefore, any worshiper who wants good for himself should frequently remember Allāh ﷻ in all of his circumstances. This is as Allāh ﷻ said,

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ ٱذۡكُرُواْ ٱللَّهَ ذِكۡرٗا كَثِيرٗا وَسَبِّحُوهُ بُكۡرَةٗ وَأَصِيلًا﴾

"O you who have believed, remember Allāh with much remembrance. And exalt Him morning and afternoon" [Al-Aḥzāb: 41-42].

The opposite of *dhikr* – remembering – is *ghaflah* – heedlessness –, which is a darkness in one's heart, a

gloominess in one's chest, and an irritable streak in one's life. That is why the Prophet ﷺ said,

((مَثَلُ الَّذِي يَذْكُرُ رَبَّهُ وَالَّذِي لَا يَذْكُرُ رَبَّهُ، مَثَلُ الْحَيِّ وَالْمَيِّتِ.))

"The likes of one who remembers his Lord and the likes of one who doesn't remember his Lord are like the living versus the dead."[1]

For the one engaged in it, *dhikr* is a source of pleasure, a rest for his mind, and a great reward multiplied many times over which he will find on the Day of Resurrection. It has measurable returns and numerous benefits for the worshiper in both this life and the next. Meanwhile, *ghaflah* is a gloominess in one's chest which brings about anxiety and grief.

In the introduction to his book *al-Wābil aṣ-Ṣayyib,* Imām Ibn al-Qayyim devoted a chapter to the benefits of *dhikr* in which he mentioned that *dhikr* has more than 100 benefits, of which he listed more than 70.[2]

Remembering Allāh ﷻ is the best thing which one can do with his time, devote himself to, and spend his hours in.

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[1] Reported by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6407 and Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 779. The wording here is al-Bukhārī's.
[2] *Al-Wābil aṣ-Ṣayyib*, p. 94-198.

It brings tranquility to the hearts of the believers, puts their souls at ease, strengthens their conviction, and increases their faith.

It is a sure sign of ultimate joy and the pathway to success in both this life and the next. In fact, every good, every joy, every pleasure, every enjoyment, and every feeling of tranquility in both this life and the next is dependent on actualizing this remembrance of Allāh ﷻ.

It is the very life of one's heart and his life as a whole. Remembering Allāh causes the heart to grow and gain strength and brings about tremendous rewards and great good in both this life and the next, the likes of which no one can count but Allāh ﷻ.

That is why Allāh ﷾ told His Prophet ﷺ,

﴿وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ فَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ وَكُن مِّنَ ٱلسَّٰجِدِينَ﴾

"And We already know that your breast is constrained by what they say. So exalt Allāh with the praises of your Lord and be of those who prostrate to Him" [Al-Ḥijr: 97-98].

The great scholar aṣ-Ṣa'dī ﷀ said, "This *Āyah* means: Frequently engage in remembering, exalting and praying to

Allāh, for that will expand and open one's chest and help him in what he needs to do."[1]

[1] *Taysīr al-Karīm ar-Raḥmān*, p. 435.

Chapter 6:
Doing Good to Allāh’s Slaves

Allāh ﷾ says,

﴿وَأَحۡسِنُوٓاْۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يُحِبُّ ٱلۡمُحۡسِنِينَ﴾

“And do good. Allāh certainly loves the good-doers” [Al-Baqarah: 195].

Doing good to the created beings can be done in a number of different ways, through both tangible and intangible means. Examples include honoring someone, financial support, providing advice on a decision, and any other form of aid and assistance. Allāh ﷾ will reward a worshiper that does good to His servants by bringing peace to his heart, facilitating his affairs, and granting him a good end and outcome.

The Prophet ﷺ said,

((مَنْ نَفَّسَ عَنْ مُؤْمِنٍ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ الدُّنْيَا نَفَّسَ اللهُ عَنْهُ كُرْبَةً مِنْ كُرَبِ يَوْمِ
الْقِيَامَةِ، وَمَنْ يَسَّرَ عَلَىٰ مُعْسِرٍ يَسَّرَ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ، وَمَنْ سَتَرَ

مُسْلِمًا سَتَرَهُ اللهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ، وَاللهُ فِي عَوْنِ الْعَبْدِ مَا كَانَ الْعَبْدُ فِي عَوْنِ أَخِيهِ.))

"Whoever relieves a believer of any of the hardships of this life, Allāh will relieve him of a hardship on the Day of Resurrection. And whoever makes things easy for one indebted to him, Allāh will make things easy for him in this life and in the hereafter. And whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allāh will conceal his faults in this life and in the hereafter. Allāh aids His servant as long as the servant is in the aid of his brother."[1]

So bringing benefit to people, assisting them and stopping to fulfil their needs are significant factors in bringing about peace of heart.

But as for those who are stingy with their good-doing and miserly in giving and good deeds, then those are some of the most tight-chested people, most afflicted by anxiety and grief, with the most miserable lives.

It has been authentically transmitted in both al-Bukhārī and Muslim that our noble Prophet ﷺ struck a profound comparison for this when he ﷺ said,

[1] Reported by Musim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 2699.

((مَثَلُ الْبَخِيلِ وَالْمُنْفِقِ كَمَثَلِ رَجُلَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمَا جُبَّتَانِ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ مِنْ ثُدِيِّهِمَا إِلَىٰ تَرَاقِيهِمَا؛ فَأَمَّا الْمُنْفِقُ فَلَا يُنْفِقُ إِلَّا سَبَغَتْ – أَوْ: وَفَرَتْ – عَلَىٰ جِلْدِهِ، حَتَّىٰ تُخْفِيَ بَنَانَهُ وَتَعْفُوَ أَثَرَهُ، وَأَمَّا الْبَخِيلُ فَلَا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُنْفِقَ شَيْئًا إِلَّا لَزِقَتْ كُلُّ حَلْقَةٍ مَكَانَهَا، فَهُوَ يُوَسِّعُهَا وَلَا تَتَّسِعُ.))

"The comparison of a stingy person and a giving person is like two men wearing two chain-mail cloaks from their chests to their collar bones. For the giving person, whenever he gives it expands" – or he said "it increases" – "over his body until it covers his fingers and covers his traces. As for the stingy person, he does not want to give anything. It sticks to him and every ring gets stuck in its place. He tries to make it looser but it does not loosen."[1]

The Prophet ﷺ compared a giving person and a stingy person to two men each wearing a cloak made of iron to protect them. The norm is that this cloak covers the area from their chest to their collar bone - i.e. above the chest and below the neck.

Whenever the giving person increases in his good-doing towards others and spending on the needy, this cloak expands and its chain-mail links increase, that is, they become wider and bigger until they cover his entire body

[1] Reported by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1443 and Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1021. The wording here is al-Bukhārī's.

and cover his fingertips. That is what the Prophet's phrase صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم, "until it covers his fingers" means. They also wipe away his footprints wherever he steps due to their length and size, which is the meaning of his صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم statement, "and cover his traces."

As for the stingy person who does not do good to others or spend his wealth in charity, then every link of this chain-mail cloak stays in its spot and no matter how much he wants to loosen this cloak to protect his body he is not able to do so.

This is such a profound comparison showing the effects of charitable spending versus stinginess on a servant's condition and spiritual life. Charitable spending, giving, and good-doing are all factors that expand one's provisions, bring tranquility to one's heart and relax one's mind. They also contribute to erasing the traces of the sins which one has committed.

But the stingy person is the opposite of that. Whenever he wants to give charity, his soul feels constricted and he becomes tight-fisted with his wealth. This leads him to have a miserable life and a constricted chest. This misery and constricted feeling corresponds to how stingy he is and how far removed he is from doing good to others.

Chapter 7:
Courage

Courage has a profound effect on feeling at ease and peace of heart. This is in contrast to cowardice, for cowardice subjects a person to distress and unease throughout his life. The level of unease he experiences will be proportionate to the level that the cowardice, fear, weakness and false ideas in his heart have entered into his psyche despite them not having any basis in reality.

Courage is one of the many effects of having strong *īmān* and a good connection to Allāh. The more one increases his *īmān* and connection to Allāh, the more his courage will increase and his heart will grow stronger, which will in turn bring about happiness and peace of heart for him.

Allāh ﷻ said,

﴿إِنَّمَا ذَٰلِكُمُ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَآءَهُۥ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ﴾

"It is only the *shayṭān* who instills fear of his allies in you, so do not fear them but fear Me if you are truly believers" [Āli 'Imrān: 175].

And it has been authentically reported that the Prophet ﷺ often used to seek refuge with Allāh ﷻ from cowardliness and stinginess,[1] for when these two things are both found in one's heart, they cause him to feel a tremendous sense of constrictedness, tension and anxiety.

[1] Reported by al-Bukhārī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 2893 and Muslim in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 2706.

Chapter 8:
Distancing Oneself from the Diseases and Sicknesses of the Heart

The diseases, sicknesses and calamities of the heart are many, and hearts can get sick just as bodies get sick. In fact, the sicknesses of one's heart such as envy, malice, rancor, and other diseases can have a significant impact on a person. When these blameworthy characteristics and disgraceful maladies enter one's heart they destroy it, and when they reach the chest they darken it, and they bring about constrictedness, depression and a bad ending.

On the other hand, for those who are free of these sicknesses and whose hearts are filled with the opposite things such as feelings of safety, fulfillment, truthfulness and affection, then these things will be reflected in those people by them finding their chest opened, their heart at rest, and a sense of inner peace.

In his book *"The Diseases and Cures of the Heart"*, Sheikh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah ﵀ wrote, "The Qur'ān is a cure for what is in the chests. Whoever has the diseases of doubts and desires in his heart, then the Qur'ān contains clear messages which separate the truth from falsehood. The diseases of ruinous doubts are removed through knowledge,

contemplation and comprehension so that one can see things as they truly are.

The Qur'ān contains wisdom, wonderful exhortations in the form of both encouragement and incitement of fear, and stories which contain lessons that bring about the rectification of one's heart. These things push the heart towards what will benefit it and away from what will harm it. The result is that the heart loves guidance and hates deviance, even though previously it loved deviance and hated guidance. The Qur'ān eliminates those sicknesses which bring about ruin and it thereby sets the heart aright. It rectifies the desires of one's heart, returning it back to its natural state that it was formed on, just as a body returns to its natural healthy state. The heart is nourished by *īmān* and the Qur'ān which both purify and strengthen it, just as the body is nourished by those things which grow and strengthen it, for purification of the heart is like growth of the body.

Linguistically, *zakāh* – purification – means: growth and increased uprightness. One could say, "*Zakā shay'*" – "something underwent *zakāh*" – when it grows in a good way. The heart needs to be nourished so that it can mature and grow until it reaches its full potential and upright state, just as the body needs to be nourished by provisions that are beneficial for it.

And of course, in addition to that, it must be protected from things that would harm it. For the body

cannot grow without being provided with what would benefit it and being protected from what would harm it. Likewise, the heart cannot become pure, grow, or reach its upright state unless it receives what would benefit it and is shielded from what would harm it."[1]

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[1] *Amrāḍ al-Qulūb wa Shifā'uhā*, p. 5.

Chapter 9:
Not Indulging in Excess

One factor leading to peace of heart is: guarding one's tongue against excessive speech, guarding one's ears against excessive listening, and guarding one's eyes against excessive gazing.

That is because indulging oneself and one's heart distracts from the important matters and the things which bring about happiness, success and wellbeing in both this life and the next. Indulging in excess has a marked effect on a person's life and brings about constrictedness, exhaustion and trouble. In reality, excessive listening, watching and speaking can result in anxiety and depression, and can bring about detrimental outcomes which are neither praiseworthy in this life or the next.

How often has excessive gazing, speaking or listening lead to misfortune and misery?

That is why the believer must strive to cleanse and purify his soul with virtuous behavior, minding his mannerisms, moderating himself, and distancing himself from anything that would harm or destroy him.

One of the trials that people face today when so many gates of indulgence have been opened for them is their

preoccupation with looking at the phones and refreshing the pages and websites in search of more content, or perhaps worse and worse content. This has resulted in serious harms to the spiritual lives and manners of many Muslims, as well as wasting their time and causing them all sorts of anxiety, depression, and uneasy hearts.

Chapter 10:
Diligently Following Our Esteemed Prophet ﷺ

Following the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ, sticking to his exemplary path, and bringing ourselves in line with his guidance is one of the most important factors is gaining peace of heart. In fact, it is the culmination of this entire topic. That is because it is modeling oneself after the person with the most peace of heart ﷺ, the best of manners, the most beautiful conduct, and the purest soul.

And Allāh ﷻ said,

﴿أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ﴾

"Did We not open your chest for you?" [Ash-Sharḥ: 1].

Allāh opening the Prophet's heart ﷺ means expanding it and bringing all sorts of virtues, exemplary features, and good manners together within it.

For that reason, the more that a person follows Allāh's Messenger ﷺ and brings himself in line with his wonderful guidance, the more that he will gain that open chest, ease of mind, and peace of heart.

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said, "The point is that Allāh's Messenger صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم was the most complete created being in every trait which brings about peace of heart, open heartedness, joy, and spiritual fulfillment, as a result of which he was the most complete created being in this openness, life, and joy. This is in addition to the specific circumstances of his chest literally being opened.

Those who are most complete in following him enjoy the most complete peace of heart, enjoyment, and happiness. A worshiper gains that peace of heart, happiness, enjoyment and pleasure to the extent that he follows the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم, for the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم was the apex of peace of heart, exalted mention, and being pardoned of sins. So, the extent to which one follows him in those matters is related to the extent to which he follows his example, and Allāh's aid is sought.

Likewise, the followers of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم have a share of Allāh's safeguarding, protection, defense, and granting of honor and assistance, and that share corresponds to the extent to which they follow the Prophet's example, whether a little or a lot. So whoever finds good, then let him praise Allāh, and whoever finds something else, then he should only blame himself."[1]

[1] *Zād al-Ma'ād*, 2/62.

اللَّهُمَّ اشْرَحْ صُدُورَنَا، وَيَسِّرْ أُمُورَنَا، اللَّهُمَّ زَيِّنَّا بِزِينَةِ الْإِيمَانِ، وَاجْعَلْنَا هُدَاةً مُهْتَدِينَ، وَيَسِّرْ لَنَا سُلُوكَ الصِّرَاطِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ؛ صِرَاطِ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَشُهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ، وَحَسُنَ أُوْلَئِكَ رَفِيقًا، إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ، وَأَهْلُ الرَّجَاءِ، وَأَنْتَ حَسْبُنَا وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلِ.

O Allāh, open our hearts and facilitate matters for us. O Allāh, beautify us with the beauty of īmān and make us guides who are ourselves guided. Make it easy for us to traverse the straight path, the path of those Prophets, truthful ones, martyrs and righteous ones whom You have blessed, and what excellent company they are! Indeed, You are the Hearer of our calls, the One in Whom we hope. You are sufficient for us, and what an excellent Caretaker You are!

وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ، وَصَلَّىٰ اللهُ عَلَىٰ نَبِيِّنَا مُحَمَّدٍ، وَعَلَىٰ آلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ وَسَلَّمَ.

All praise is due to Allāh, the Lord of all creation, and may Allāh bestow His peace and blessings upon our Prophet, Muḥammad, as well as his family and companions.

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